

Salinas Valley Water Coalition

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Dear Members and Friends

This past year has presented some difficulties though we are continuing to work diligently on the various national and local issues. For fiscal year for 2022-2023, we're happy to share with you what the SVWC has achieved this past year, our path forward and goals for the upcoming year. Please know that none of this would have been possible without your support –thank you!

After approximately 3 years of litigation with the Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA), we entered into a Settlement Agreement last year. We believe the Settlement Agreement protects the water rights of our members and all the landowners within the Salinas Valley/River Groundwater Basin (SVRGB) and provides certain protections with regards to the way the MCWRA can and should operate the reservoirs to benefit the lands and fishery resources within the SVRGB. We have worked with the MCWRA this past year to implement our Settlement Agreement, specifically:

- **The Drought Technical Advisory Committee (D-TAC) was established last year and developed guiding principles and standards as to how the reservoirs should be operated during dry years and drought. These Guiding Principles and Standards were adopted by the MCWRA BOD and established the set of standards for how the reservoirs should be operated in dry years, respecting the fishery needs and the water rights and needs of the landowners.**

Note: The SVWC has asked for a drought contingency plan since the approval of the SVWP – and almost 20 years later the MCWRA has put one in place.

- **The MCWRA and SVWC's Consultant have continued working collaboratively with the D-TAC to identify a winter release scenario that would provide for reservoir releases during the winter months while also providing anticipated environmental benefits to include, but not limited to, steelhead and recharge of the Salinas valley groundwater basin.**

MCWRA staff has subsequently developed an "Interim Operations Plan" (IOP) for implementing a scenario like our proposed winter release scenario discussed in our Settlement Agreement. This IOP will be presented to the MCWRA Res-Op Committee and for recommendation as to adoption of the IOP by the MCWRA Board of Directors. This is expected to occur before the end of 2022.

The SVWC expects to support the IOP in that it will provide reservoir releases during the winter months while providing additional steelhead

Mission Statement: The water resources of the Salinas River Basin should be managed properly in a manner that promotes fairness and equity to all landowners within the basin. The management of these resources should have a scientific basis, comply with all laws and regulations, and promote the accountability of the governing agencies.

passage days, with little to no impacts/effect as to the ‘rubber dam’ diversion and deliveries to CSIP. It is our understanding and belief, that by keeping the aquifer fuller during the winter, it will take less water during the irrigation season to provide water to the rubber dam – providing more efficient conveyance of water in the river.

This is real progress, but only a beginning as the MCWRA is proceeding with the preparation of a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for the Salinas River Basin. The HCP may alter the current reservoir releases and any adopted IOP. It is important that we are part of that process, and as such, the inclusion of our participation was also an element of our Settlement Agreement. Stakeholder participation is key in the preparation of the HCP and it is important your voices are heard and concerns considered. The SVWC will continue to work with the MCWRA to fulfill the terms of the Agreement and will continue utilizing the best science and law available.

Your contributions were significant and generous allowing us to successfully complete this litigation. We structured our membership dues and special contribution for litigation for this fiscal year in a manner allowing us to fully pay outstanding legal and technical fees, while sustaining us through our settlement discussions. Again, thank you!

SGMA

The Coalition has been involved with the various SGMA processes, including the initial formation of the Salinas Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency and the Arroyo Seco GSA. Several Coalition Board members are participating in the various SVBGSA and ASGSA committees and the Coalition has had an extensive level of participation and input into the development of the various subbasin GSP’s—and as such, we believe the GSP’s that have been developed are much better products.

Through this participation we monitor and participate in the various meetings, including the various GSP Planning Committees, board meetings, advisory committee meetings and workshops. We have reviewed all of the different GSP’s and submitted comments as appropriate and in an effort to further support the Coalition’s Mission Statement and Goal – that the water resources of the Salinas River Basin should be managed properly in a manner that promotes fairness and equity to all landowners within the basin—and that the management of these resources should have a scientific basis, comply with all laws and regulations and promote the accountability of the governing agencies – and to ensure the protection of our members and the basin’s landowners’ water rights.

The SVBGSA adopted individual GSP’s earlier this year and are now waiting for the approval of the GSP’s by the Department of Water Resources. The adopted GSP for the Upper Valley and the Forebay, including the Arroyo Seco Cone Management Area, found these subbasins to be sustainable and the implementation goal is to maintain that sustainability. The SVBGSA has formed individual subbasin implementation committees to focus on the implementation of the individual subbasin GSP. The SVWC and its members are well represented on these committees, and we welcome your input and participation.

Participation is the price that must be paid in order to affect the management of the basin’s resources in a fair and equitable manner. We believe our membership is well served by this participation. We want to hear from you and welcome your comments and concerns on these various issues. In order to facilitate hearing from you, we are striving to have more workshops on these critical issues.

OTHER

The SVWC continues to monitor other MCWRA's activities, including the needed repair and maintenance of the reservoirs, the funding for these repairs, the Interlake Tunnel Project, and all SGMA and GSA activities as discussed above, along with how they intersect with MCWRA activities and programs. We have formed a subcommittee to work with a subcommittee of the Salinas Basin Water Alliance group (primarily comprised of and representing the northern area interests) to work together on those issues we can, so that together we will have a stronger voice. To this end, we have been successful in working together on the following:

- Looking for opportunities for funding the deferred maintenance of the two existing MCWRA reservoirs – we retained a Lobbying Group to work with us to identify and secure funding. This effort will continue to the end of this year and to work with the MCWRA on this matter.
- Deep Aquifer Study: the SVWC and the Alliance have agreed to pay for the agricultural portion of funding this study undertaken by the SVBGSA. The SVWC agreed to participate in this funding as they believe the Study is an important element in identifying if there are potential impacts to continued and additional pumping of the Deep Aquifer, and how, and what, recommendations should be undertaken to protect it.
- Having the SVBGSA look at individual subbasin implementation costs for developing a fee structure, rather than a one size fits all approach as they have previously undertaken.
- Inter-subbasin flow modeling: to better understand the impacts from and to adjacent subbasins, and if so to what extent and how the inter-subbasin flows are related, we have worked with the Alliance to request the SVBGSA do certain modeling in this regard and have offered to pay for such modeling. We are currently in the process of working with them on an agreement to do this modeling. It is crucial to better understand these flows so that consensus can be built to help solve some of the unique problems in certain areas of the Salinas Valley.

Your membership and contribution continue to be voluntary and are greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions or want additional information, please call or email Nancy (831-224-2879 nisakson@mbay.net), or one of your Board members listed below.

We thank you for your support ~ it is greatly appreciated!

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